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A LETTER

TO THE

Rt. Hon. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P.,

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER.

ON THE

FORMATION OF THE INITIATIVE BOARD IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

BY

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A LETTER,

&c.

My dear Mr. Gladstone,

It has been with me a principle, which the anxious nature and engrossing occupation of my profession have made both advisable and necessary, to abstain from discussing, as far as in me lay, all subjects of 'University Reform' except those that are intimately connected either with Medicine, or with the Natural Sciences related to it, or with the Readership in Anatomy which I hold in Christ Church. I saw that there were many persons of more competence and with more leisure engaged in this useful work.

In the same manner it has been a principle with me, which the long declining health of the late Regius Professor of Medicine made a moral duty, that, though holding no, strictly speaking, University office, I should assist my friends in the University in the departments above alluded to; and although by the arrangements consequent on the death of that excellent man, I have been exonerated from such virtual responsibility as I formerly had, I can-

not but still take the warmest interest in the success of the departments over which he had presided.

It is then my apology for writing to you on the subject of certain changes in the University, proposed and discussed, that for the success of the departments of Natural Science, and for the progress of Rational Scientific Medicine in this place, some changes in our system seem to me to be absolutely required.

What changes *within* these departments require our first attention, I have stated in my evidence to the Oxford University Commission; and I shall not force the details upon you now. They are in a word, mainly, that we should have a Professor of Anatomy and Physiology, not engaged in any other work, with the power, and means, of appointing an Assistant; that we should have a Professor of Medicine, whose duty should be to lay the foundations, and make clear the rational principles, on which Medicine depends, as distinct from mere practical and clinical instruction; to give general lectures on Hygiene as well for the Clergy, Missionaries, and others, as for Students of Medicine; that there should be a Professor of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy; and that these, with the other Natural Science Professors, should form a more or less independent Board for the regulation of their department. Further particulars it is needless now to discuss.

As matters are now, the Faculty of Medicine is here a nullity: last year and the year before, we

did not grant a single degree of Bachelor of Medicine; and in the year before, but one: and yet Sir Benjamin Brodie, himself a member of no University[a], strongly urges Medical Students to obtain a University Education.

Nay, further, there are not medical graduates to occupy Fellowships which they might hold: or at all events they do not hold them. Indeed, the method of working efficiently our existing machinery for the benefit of the Faculty of Medicine has yet to be discovered. There must be some reason for this state of things, which an active executive could discover and remedy.

I have discussed this quite enough elsewhere[b]. The fact is generally admitted, I think, though I do not see in the Report to the Hebdomadal Board, any plan for attracting students of Medicine to Oxford.

Indeed, I am well aware that many persons believe that students of Medicine should not come to Oxford at all: they consider 'students of Medicine' and a 'complete medical school,' as synonymous. Yet if our education is worth anything, and if the opinions most entertain of its value are correct, it is of course most desirable that as many practitioners of Medicine as possible, should pass through such education as we profess to give.

This I have also stated in common with other

[a] Report of the Oxford University Commission, p. 81.

[b] Evidence to the Oxford University Commission, pp. 235 and 285. Remarks on the Extension of Education in the University of Oxford. Parker, 1848.

persons, and my remarks have been quoted in various places to this effect. I know however no words which express my sentiments on this matter so briefly, or confirm them so completely, as a passage quoted by Dr. Pusey from the late Bishop of Lincoln.

"A strictly professional education, commenced at too early a period, has for the most part a tendency to cramp the mind, to narrow its views, to subject it to the trammels of system, to dispose it to acquiesce without examination in the conclusions laid before it, perhaps even to unfit it for the task of examination. The advantages derived from it are rather of a mechanical character: it places a set of tools in the student's hands and renders him expert in the use of them; but their application is confined within narrow limits. Observe, on the contrary, the quickness and energy with which one whose education has been conducted on a more liberal plan applies himself to professional studies; he displays at once an aptitude to any pursuit, however foreign to his former occupation; nothing comes amiss to him; he soon places himself on a level, in extent of professional learning, with those whose life has been directed to that single object; while in the application of his learning to practice, he possesses an incalculable advantage, in the power which the habit of close and accurate reasoning confers, of seizing at once the important point of every question, and in the copiousness of illustration which his stores of general knowledge supply[c]."

I may be allowed to remark that, from this matter not being understood, we stand in great jeopardy of *substituting* professional for general education; whereas what should be done is to *add*, when the general education is completed, such professional knowledge as may be decided on. If this is not attended to, our professional Students will be worse educated than now.

[c] Bp. Kaye, charge of, 1831, as quoted by Dr. Pusey in the Report presented to the Hebdomadal Board.

To these statements I may add another weighty consideration: if we have no Students of Medicine the "Natural Science School" will probably fail. I was instrumental, whether right or wrong, in aiding the formation of this School, though wholly dissenting from some of its arrangements. A few persons in the University studying earnestly for that School, with the object of making a commencement of their practical work of life in and through it, (as students of Medicine do, for Natural Science is to them, in every way, a stern reality,) a few such persons will give an impetus to the School which will bear it through to one of its main objects, the imparting general information to the non-professional student.

It was on the ground of the necessity of its existence for the man of general education, that I formerly urged its foundation; and I said at that time (1848) of the introduction of Natural History studies into Oxford, "It *must* and *will* bear *some* fruit; what its *full* fruit may be, we may hope, but need not now enquire[d]." Now this fruit will be, in part, the bringing more students of Medicine hither; and the bringing them hither will be the saving and making of the Natural Science School, to the great advantage of the medical profession, and a consequent gain to society.

I need not and dare not enlarge on this topic here. Few know what blessings they owe to rational and scientific medicine and surgery, and what

[d] Remarks on the Extension, &c., p. 21.

curse is in the world from their degradation by impostors; few, therefore, comparatively, understand why such great stress is laid on thorough training for the higher branches of these subjects. It is because medicine and surgery are progressive sciences; because they are full of mistakes of former ages, and replete with the fancies of restless innovators; because nothing but the judgment of a sound education, and the *lumen siccum* of a disciplined understanding, can resist and crush the one, or eradicate the other.

It is then of great importance that some means should be found to remove the load that depresses Medical study here. It is my firm conviction that no contrivance can effect this, and that no one can wisely suggest the means, till those, engaged in the University in directing special studies, can readily originate practical measures, and are deemed trustworthy to carry them out.

It is this circumstance which has forced me to consider in common with so many others the best constitution for that body which is to take the initiative in University Legislation. It is manifest that upon the proper adjustment of this question mainly depends the peace of the University for years to come—its well being, and perhaps its existence,—always supposing that free action is still accorded to us by the Government. So many persons, including the Vice-Chancellor and the Regius Professor of Hebrew, have expressed this opinion that I only advance an admitted fact; a fact which I

state most respectfully towards the existing governing body, and with hearty feelings of gratitude and esteem towards its individual members.

The objects, which I suppose are to be aimed at in forming an Initiative Board, are the simplest methods for ensuring,

1st. The maintenance of the discipline of the University,

2ndly. The judicious regulation of its studies,

3rdly. The proper administration of its revenues,

4thly. The free and ready decision of the many questions of detail, which on various subjects must constantly arise, in the affairs of so important an element in the body politick.

It is clear that in order to represent so large a body as Convocation, of which every member is entitled to a vote on almost every subject connected with the University, and in which there are so many different interests as the Collegiate system implies, there must be a large number of representatives, if perfect confidence on the part of the represented is to be secured.

The importance of such confidence, and the evil of a constant state of discussion, expectation, and apprehension of too great change, or too great hindrance, cannot be over estimated.

Now in a University like Edinburgh the matter is simple enough. The Teachers are the Professors: the Executive are the Professors: the Senatus is composed of the Professors.

Nobody is interested in doubting their management or desires to share it: except in such matters

as the town council have by law a right to regulate or control.

The case here is very different. To the representatives of the University have to be added those of the Colleges, and the Colleges have become practically the most important part of the machine.

The Colleges must be represented—and no College can represent another College.

The Head of the College properly and naturally represents it. But as the teaching and discipline are virtually carried on by the Fellows, they justly demand a full share in the conduct of affairs, and they must be represented also.

So, generally, the University is to be represented by her Professors: the Colleges each by its Head, and by one or more of its Tutors.

There are 19 Colleges, and 5 Halls; each would send their Head, and one or more Tutors elected by the *Resident* Members of Convocation of each College; making in all about 50; then, 29 Professors, and perhaps three more to be created, give a total, with the Proctors, of 84: to which I must add that the new Halls should send one of their Principals, elected by themselves, for every forty or fifty resident students they have collectively: and that I should desire to see included the Bodleian and Radcliffe Librarians.

Now what I wish to point out by this statement is, that if the University generally and the Collegiate Institutions are to be fully and fairly represented, I cannot see how the number can be less than this. The President and Tutors of one

College cannot represent the Principal and Tutors of another, any more than the Professor of Chemistry can appear for the Professor of Greek. They have each and all a right to an immediate hearing, and each and all may demand to be able at once, and without needless delay, and a complicated process, to state their respective cases, or offer their several proposals.

Against this plan, which is by no means identical with that of the Commissioners which has found in Oxford so much opposition, there is one objection, plausible and apparently valid, the great size of the body and the number of persons so distracted from their other work: and another, much more strongly felt, the predominance, it is said, of the Professors.

I will consider the first objection, the size of the Board. It is easily disposed of.

It can be injurious only, either because it will not work; or because, though it will work, it employs too many hands for the result obtained. For the first, 80 persons can work together as well as 25, for every one acquainted with the proceedings of deliberative bodies, knows too well that the delays and hindrances that may be caused by 25 in coming to a decision on any practical matter are quite astounding; and *to get work done by a Body composed of only* 25, *Committees must be constantly appointed.* But if Committees must be frequently appointed within the Body, is it not most irrational to limit exceedingly the number out of which the

Committees have to be chosen? Certainly. *The Committees should be selected out of as large a number of competent persons as possible*, and therefore also, as there must be in the circumstances of Oxford *a large* deliberative body, (if all are represented, and if Convocation is to be satisfied,) it must work WHOLLY *by Committees.*

I suppose then that such a Board exists: when all are present it numbers perhaps 85.

1. Every measure must be introduced in the form of a motion, that a Committee, consisting of a variable number, (except in cases to be mentioned, not exceeding 5,) should be appointed for a certain purpose.

2. This Committee may be executive, or deliberative.

E.g. There would be an *executive* Police Committee.

Or, a Committee would be appointed to *report* on a certain subject: the report would be accepted, or rejected; if accepted, it would go to Convocation; and this would soon become almost a formal transaction, except on great occasions; the same Committee or another in its place would then be appointed to execute the subject-matter of the report. No executive Committee would be appointed with power to expend money of indefinite amount.

Now in fact this plan is nearly the same as that of the Vice-Chancellor, only that I feel that it is impossible to consider the University to be represented if the Professors are not there; and the

same as the Commissioners' Congregation, except that I do not include the Assistant Professors or Lecturers, and that I should therefore make one distinction between a Professor and an Assistant Professor, *that one had a seat at the Board, and that the other had not;* and this Board would sanction the creation of Professorships, or Assistant Professorships, just as it pleased.

This simple arrangement seems to me to meet the second class of objections derived from the overwhelming number of Professors, so strongly and ably urged by Dr. Pusey: he estimates them as at least 76, whereas I reckon them as not more than 32, of whom at this moment 4 are Heads of Houses; and it ought also in my judgment to satisfy those who are anxious to give the Professors their due influence[e].

To me it seems very plain that if the University and Colleges are to continue to exist in anything like their present state, all the Professors on the one hand, and each of the Colleges, on the other, by their Head, and by their Common-room, must have immediate, direct personal access to the Initiative Board. I cannot conceive anything but dissatisfaction in the end, if you attempt to engage

[e] There are at present Professorships (excluding that of Music) which might be held by 31 individuals. They are actually held by 28, of whom 4 are Heads of Houses, and 15 are not above the degree of M.A. The plan proposed above supposes that the two Arabic Professorships would be united, that there would be one Professorship of Medicine and one of Anatomy, and that three new Professorships would be created, namely, one of Latin, one of Mental Philosophy, and one of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy.

some of the Professors to stand in the place of the remainder; or if you get the members of one College to act on behalf of the members of another; and I cannot see that business will be otherwise than rapidly and thoroughly done, *if a Committee be appointed for every purpose*, with power to *execute* or to *report*, as the case may be. In the case of power being granted to execute, the appointment, for a limited time only, but renewable, would be conferred by Convocation.

To those who have not reflected on this matter, any arrangement, really including the various interests concerned, will appear too cumbrous to work: but it is a very prevalent fallacy, as I have said, to believe that twenty-five can work together much better or quicker than eighty or eighty-five. Neither can work satisfactorily except through Committees.

I may add further, that a week's notice of all motions should be given, and every vote confirmed at a subsequent meeting, and the result printed and circulated to the members of the Board; for in this case no member need go to the discussion of any subject matter which does not concern him.

In practice, the mere formal business would shortly be carried on by a few men; and in every important matter, the Committee, consisting of those most conversant with the question in hand, would work alone and report, and the report would be accepted, or objected to and thrown back for amendment. Those interested would use every

dispatch; and frivolous objectors would, after a little experience, find their own level.

I stated above, that I should make an exception to the limitation of five as the number of Committees: in the case of the expenditure of money the number should be on each occasion optional, between three and nine; and the present Hebdomadal Board should form a standing Committee, which would deliberate alone when it pleased, and bring forward reports as it pleased, and be appointed permanently and absolutely for various purposes to be defined. I cannot believe that this arrangement would be found so derogatory to the eminent persons composing that Board, as in some of the evidence presented to the Board of Heads of Houses and Proctors it is made to appear[f].

It would be idle to discuss whether any new Constitution can remedy all evils, or satisfy all objectors—whether *all* close Fellowships are an absolute evil: whether Fellowships appropriated to particular Faculties can be made permanently useful; whether any University can be thoroughly effective without some form of Retiring Pensions; whether by Examinations Colleges will always obtain the

[f] Since the above was in type, I have seen for the first time Mr. Barry's "Remarks on the three proposals for reforming the Constitution of the University of Oxford," in which a plan is advocated which agrees with that proposed in the text in limiting the number of public Lecturers at the Board, but differs from it in two essential points; for Mr. Barry, in other respects, adopts the Commissioners' scheme, which neither allows the Collegiate bodies to elect their representatives, nor makes the appointment of Committees a necessary mode of conducting business.

man who will prove in the long run the best citizen; whether increased intellectual activity will bring in its train new and great evils; whether our present quiet is without its special advantages; whether our Collegiate system has done all it might have done for discipline or mental training:—there is no one of these propositions, except the first, that, whether put in the affirmative or in the negative, would not excite in a mixed company the most vigorous opposition.

But though on these points I must not now say anything, yet I may express the hope that your great influence may be used to adjust the difference of statement, (I dare hardly say sooth the difference of opinion,) which exists on one point, viz.: concerning the relative value of Professors and of Tutors. A sad array of almost incompatible statements might be collected concerning either body—the strife is not ended—it is not for me to attempt to reconcile them. But I may make bold to say that the faith of some of my friends among the Tutors will remain unshaken, even though hereafter they should become Professors; and that Professors need take no higher model for singleness of purpose, and devotedness to their calling than may be found in every direction among Oxford Tutors.

I could not have allowed myself to discuss this subject of a Constitution, but in the hope that the suggestions I have made may help to settle a question which makes a hearing on the subject of University Government somewhat difficult of attain-

ment. "If your plan gives power to the Professors, it is mischievous." "If your plan leaves the University in the hands of the Tutors, it is bad." Why cannot both *work* together? I have every hope that the time is coming when they will do so. If, under the new arrangements, all Professors reside at their post, exercising a daily influence for good on the intellectual and religious culture of the place, they will meet, according to their station and ability, with the sympathy and co-operation of all the earnest men now engaged in tuition in Oxford.

For my own part, I see no practical difficulty, under the Constitution I have sketched, in the harmonious working of an able, conscientious body of College Tutors, and of a distinguished corps of resident Professors. It is clear enough to me that if we do not find the means to combine the two, the Professorial Element will not give way.

Not long before his death, CHALMERS, standing at the gate of All Souls, and gazing up to the Radcliffe Library, said to me—"You have the best machinery in the world for the purpose of Christian Education, but you don't know how to use it."

Every year, that has since elapsed, has, as that Christian Philosopher would have desired, done much towards making his remark less applicable. But God grant the whole matter come to a speedy and happy issue. I see years passing by, energy wasted, party spirit fostered, sadness and sorrow of heart; in some, who, from accidental causes,

cannot find room for the patient labour they long for; in others, who look on the younger generation as eager overmuch, rash and self-willed. Whither knowledge, opinion, power, the shortcomings of rulers, or impatience of the people, may in the world's history carry our race, is known alone to the Creator and Preserver of men: but this I am sure of, that all who desire the happiness and progress of Man, are interested in the maintenance and improvement of Religious Education in England.

What England may yet be allowed to gain for Truth and for Civilisation—what she may throw away—who shall determine? It is a momentous question. Her sons may not rest, dreaming of her greatness—their strength must be tried as was that of their fathers. She, who has cause to be grateful for the public men she has heretofore received at the hands of Oxford, may say to him who now frames new laws for the Education of her youth—may the words be of as happy omen, as when first uttered!

Cæsarem vehis et fortunas ejus!

Believe me to be,

My dear Mr. Gladstone,

Ever most faithfully yours,

HENRY W. ACLAND.

Oxford,
February 2, 1854.

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